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THE PURSE

A Comedy in Two Acts

BY

THEODORE HARRIS

Dramatized from Balzac's "La Bourse."

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THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY.

THE PURSE.

CHARACTERS.

HIPPOLYTE DE NEUVILLE, *an artist.*

GENERAL KERGAROUET, }
COUNT DU HALGA, } *Friends to the Leseigneurs.*

ALPHONSE LATOURETTE, }
LOUIS, } *Friends to de Neuville.*
EUGENE, }

A WAITER IN A CAFE.

ADELAIDE LESEIGNEUR.

MADAME LESEIGNEUR, *mother to Adelaide.*

SCENE: Paris, in the reign of Napoleon I.

COSTUMES OF THE PERIOD.

Time in representation, one hour and forty minutes.

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THE PURSE.

ACT I.

SCENE 1.—MADAME LESEIGNEUR'S *apartments in Hotel Gibraltar.*

[*Enter* MADAME LESEIGNEUR *and* ADELAIDE.]

A. Come, mamma, let us dress! It is almost time for our walk. See, what a beautiful day we have! The sun is shining brightly from the bluest of skies, and the air seems to distill a heavenly elixir! O these September days, mamma, are they not glorious?

M. L. Ah, my child, September brings me at once the happiest and the saddest of memories. It was in September I was married; in September, sixteen years ago, you were born; and in September, alas! your poor father was killed in battle.

A. Dear papa! I am so proud of him! General Kergaronet always says to me, "Yes, my dear Adelaide, we fought like tigers that day! Three times we advanced, and three times we were repulsed. In the third attack, a German officer broke through my guard, and cut me this ugly scar, clean across my cheek—see, my dear! and a tall giant of a soldier had his bayonet within a foot of my throat—when up rushed your father, and cut! cut!—up with the bayonet!—down with the sword!—a thrust here!—a thrust there!—and both lay in a heap on the ground. Then forward he went like a lion—and—and—I saw him never again!—ah, my child! Since I can not pay the debt I owe to my dear, my honored friend—let me at least testify my gratitude to his daughter!" And

then the General sobs like a girl, mamma! Is it not strange that so brave a man should have so soft a heart? He *is* brave, because you know it was he who led the men on to the fourth charge and won the battle.

M. L. Strange? No; how could it be otherwise! My old nurse used to sing to me while I was yet a little child:—

> A brave heart and a tender heart,
> A staunch heart and a true:
> That is the one for you, my dove,
> That is the one for you.

And though all my life I have lived among soldiers—I have never seen a brave man who was not tender-hearted; nor a coward that was not cruel.

A. Well, the General is as soft-hearted as a woman, at any rate—the dear old hero! But do I not imitate him well, mamma?—his "cut! cut! up with the bayonet! down with the sword!—a thrust here!—a thrust there!—and both lay in a heap on the ground." If only you would let me go on the stage! Just think, I might become a great actress!—and then wouldn't you have a grand chatteau, and horses and carriages, and servants—and— [*A loud crash heard in the room above.*]

M. L. Mon Dieu, Adelaide! What was that? Somebody falling?

A. In Monsieur de Neuville's room! Hark! that was a groan!

M. L. Let us go! Quick—he may be dying!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—Hippolyte de Neuville's *Studio;* de Neuville *discovered on the floor, a step-ladder across his body, unconscious.*

[*Enter* Madame L. *and* Adelaide.]

M. L. Our fears are true! Poor young man! The flask of spirits, Adelaide, hand it to me!

A. Isn't he handsome, mamma?—so pale! See how his hair clusters about his forehead! What long eyelashes! O misericordia! Here is a gash! It is bleeding! Look! O, what shall we do?

M. L. Hush, my child!—reach me a little water! Let us bathe his forehead! So! Now he recovers!

[*They draw back as he wakes from his swoon.*]

Hippolyte. [*Dazed, and wandering in his speech.*] A little more and it will be done! Yes, I shall soon finish it. It will bring me, perhaps, five thousand francs. Think of it, Hippolyte de Neuville!—and you only twenty-four!

M. L. Mon Dieu, Adelaide; he is out of his head. [*Aside.*]

H. Now, exit poverty—and enter fame and riches! What a gorgeous studio I shall have! And yet it will be hard to leave this little attic here—where I have had so many struggles—so many little triumphs—such jolly carousals—so much of mingled tempest and sunshine. How do those lines of Beranger run:—

"With pensive eyes the little room I view,
Where in my youth I weathered it so long;
With a gay sweetheart, a staunch friend or two—
Filling each day with merry jest and song—
Making a mock of life and all its cares,
Rich in the glory of my rising sun,
Lightly I vaulted up four pair of stairs,
In the brave days when I was twenty-one!"

But what is this—blood? I am faint! What is the matter with me?

M. L. [*Coming forward.*] Sir—you must be more quiet;—you must not exert yourself—you have had a fall.

H. Madame Leseigneur! I am highly honored!—and Mademoiselle Adelaide too! Ladies—to what do I owe this unexpected pleasure? I am at your service—pray command me. Be seated, I beg of you.

M. L. It is you who must be seated, Monsieur de Neuville! You have had a fall—see, this step-ladder was across your breast when we came in. We heard a loud crash, and then a groan—and we flew up stairs at once.

H. Yes, now I remember! I was hanging a picture, and the ladder gave way all of a sudden—and down we came to the floor!

A. O, Monsieur de Neuville! Let us find the picture! What if it should be ruined?

H. Mademoiselle—you are too kind! It was only an old study I was hanging aloft out of the way.

M. L. Come Adelaide—let us go—we left our door wide open—

H. To hasten to me—

A. O that is nothing!

H. Pardon, mademoiselle, it is everything!—on my account, too!

M. L. I will call the portress, sir: you may wish to send for a physician.

H. Indeed, madame, do not trouble yourself—it is a trifle! I would have fallen from the roof to have gained this acquaintance!

M. L. Sir, you flatter us!

H. May I not call to express my gratitude, madame? If you will permit it, I will avail myself of this introduction, and be more neighborly in future. So near, you know; my studio but one flight, and directly over your apartments.

M. L. My daughter and I will be always glad to see you, Monsieur de Neuville; and now, sir, let us bid you good day.

A. Good day, Monsieur de Neuville. Pray accept this bottle of cologne-water, in case your head gives you trouble.

H. My best thanks, mademoiselle! Ladies, *au revoir*! [*Exeunt* M. L. & A.]
At last I have spoken to her, my angel! How modest she is!—and to think—maybe her little hand lay on my forehead! Ah, no wonder my brain was filled with sweet visions when I awoke! And it was this very morning that I resolved once more to follow them in their daily walk and find some means to introduce myself. Yet I would not have done it! How often have I followed them at a distance, and vainly endeavored to muster the courage to speak! How often I have paused at their door, with my hand raised to knock—and then fled at the slightest noise within! And at last you have spoken to her; you are invited to call! How her hand

trembled—how sweetly she blushed when she gave you this bottle! Ah princess, I am your devoted slave forevermore! But what—[*looking at watch*] five o'clock? And invited to dinner at six! What a confounded bore! I will hurry through,—take my leave—and then call on the Leseigneurs. A whole evening of bliss before me! Quick, Hippolyte; make your toilet and be off!

[*Exit.*]

SCENE 3.—MADAME L'S *apartments.* ADELAIDE *discovered alone.*

A. Why did I tremble so to-day when he was near me! He could almost hear my heart beating! How stupid he must have thought me—I could say nothing I who am always so loquacious—who cannot utter the words quick enough, they fly so fast to my lips! To night I will show him that maybe I am not such a dullard as he thinks me! I will be gay, I will be witty I will talk—talk—talk. He shall not say a word except it slips in edgeways whilst I am taking breath. Oh, how delightful it will be to have a young man to listen to you! Instead of the General, and his dear, stupid old shadow, Count Du Halga, and my darling mamma who always answer, "Yes, child"—"No, child"—"Hum! little one!"—and look at each other as if to say "She will be wiser when she grows older—she is yet so young, you know!" I will now have some one who will say with deference and respect, "Do you think so, Mademoiselle?" "I had not thought of that." "True, true, what wisdom—what sagacity!" and so on! I wonder why mamma has never let me speak to any of the nice young men who follow us when we go to walk in the Park. She will not even let me nod and smile back!—I am sure they mean *nothing* but friendliness—they are so pleasant and well-bred. And now I am to have the best and handsomest of them all for a friend! And he will be a great man too, they say! Already decorated with the Legion of Honor! And I think he likes me; he could not take his eyes from me to-day; even when he talked to mamma, he looked at me! Ah, that is it!

that is the reason I trembled so, and blushed! am not used to being stared at so closely by one I know. Dear, dear, why should young men be so nice? Why should we care more to have one for a friend, than a girl? What is the difference? Let me see. As to looks, they wear moustaches and trousers—we, long hair and skirts! Their voices are rough and deep—ours are smooth and high;—they scent themselves with tobacco-smoke—we with musk; they fight with swords, we with tongues; they—but I might go on forever, and still be no nearer the truth! It must be because the good Heaven has willed it so. Yet I know this—that I had rather have Hippolyte de Neuville come to-night than the nicest girl in all Paris! Yes, even than General Kergaronet, or the Count Du Halga! Why; now I think of it—I can even spare my dearest mamma, too! [*A knock.*] What, so soon! That is he—I know by the way my heart beats! Dear me, I am blushing, too! What shall I say to him? Where have all my fine thoughts gone? Courage, Adelaide, courage! You must show him you are not the foolish child he took you to be this afternoon. [*faintly*] Enter, Monsieur de Neuville!

[*Enter* HIPPOLYTE.]

H. Good evening, Mademoiselle Adelaide! What,—did you know it was I? You could not see me, I did not speak—and yet—and yet—surely, I thought I heard my name!

A. [*Confused.*] Ah, monsieur! Yes! I knew—I felt —that is—I mean—my heart beat so fast—no! no! I do not mean that. Well! How did *you* know *I* was here, Monsieur de Neuville?

H. [*Aside.*] What a sweet confession! What charming embarrassment! [*Aloud.*] Why, Mademoiselle, suppose I possessed the same infallible means? Suppose that whenever, for the past twelve months I have passed your door, my heart has quickened its pulse—my breath has almost left me—and my feet have become suddenly rooted to the ground, requiring with each new step the strength of a Hercules—what then! Do I not know the enchantress that has so worked upon me with her won-

drous arts? And whenever my being becomes suddenly perturbed and agitated—do I not know the source? Do I not divine who is near to me?

A. O, no, Monsieur, you must not say this to me! My mother may not like it.

H. Yes, your mother, that is well enough—but *you*, Mademoiselle—*you*, Adelaide—ah, you *will* let me call you so? do *you* not like it?

A. [*Aside.*] Mon Dieu! What is this has happened! It should not be! And yet it is sweet—ah, so sweet! [*Aloud.*] Sir! Your head, does it not pain you after your fall? Did it not ache? [*Aside.*] Heavens! what if his accident should have affected his brain, and he should not know what he is saying!

H. My head—no! But my heart, Adelaide—that has ached, oh! so sorely—you do not know! But why should we strive thus to conceal our feelings? It is a false sentiment, believe me! You have betrayed to me by a few words, that which has made me the happiest man in Paris to-night. Adelaide, you are mine! It is for you I have been working! For you that I won the grand prize and the Cross of the Legion of Honor! I shall have money, fame, and friends. O share them with me, dearest one! Without you they will be nothing. Speak Adelaide,—say you love me!

A. I—I—like you—very much—Hippolyte! Do not ask me for more now! Just think—we have only known each other to-day.

H. For a whole year, my Adelaide, I have worshipped you from afar—have followed you in silence to church, and in your walks. It is not a sudden fancy, a mere passing whim!

A. But how am *I* to know, Hippolyte, whether *I* am in love or not? I have never loved—never even spoken to a young man before—how can *I* tell? No, you must give me time! My mother has often said to me that a woman's heart is not like a man's. He leaps into the midst of an ardent passion at once: and alas that it should be so, Hippolyte! as easily leaps out again. But a woman grows to her love. It must be bud and blossom,

ere it unfolds to the fruit! Here comes my mother! Quick, Hippolyte—your arm—take it away!

[*Enter* MADAME LESEIGNEUR.]

M. L. Welcome, Monsieur de Neuville! I am so glad you have had no serious results from your accident. Be seated, sir. Adelaide, how could you let him stand so long? You have not even asked him to lay aside his coat! No wonder you look so warm, Monsieur,—and no wonder you are so confused, you naughty child! Where were your manners? You must pardon my daughter sir! Since the baron, my husband's death, we have lived so secluded. She is yet but a school girl! [*A knock.*] Ah! there is your godfather, General Kergarouet and the Count Du Halga! Go, Adelaide, to meet them. [*Exit* A.] Old army friends of my husband's, sir. Each night we have a game of cards together. They are utterly inseparable! Wherever the one is, there you find the other also! In fact we call the Count the General's shadow! He is so silent, so reserved; never venturing a remark—always echoing his friend. When the General laughs, the Count smiles. If he says, "It is cold," his shadow says, "It is not warm;" let him remark, "It is late"—"True, it is not early" says the Count. A queer story, Monsieur! They both loved the same lady —now alas! dead these many years! but she could only love one in return, and he was the General. Yet after their marriage it seemed to make no difference to the Count. He even stuck closer to the General than ever; as if his rival had become trebly dear, now that his adored one had thought him worthy of her affections. He became more and more reticent and melancholy, however. The malicious ones even said his mind was affected. But that was false! He was simply eccentric —nothing more! [*The* GENERAL *is heard kissing* ADELAIDE *amidst much laughter, in the adjoining room.*]

H. Torture! Who is this General? He is kissing my Adelaide! [*Aside.*]

[*Enter* A., GEN. K. *and* COUNT DU H.]

A. The General has been plaguing me, mamma. We must beat him badly to-night at cards, for that!

M. L. Never fear, Adelaide! Do we not always do that? He is so unlucky, you know. General Kergarouet, our neighbor Monsieur Hippolyte de Neuville! Count Du Halga, our neighbor, the artist whom all Paris has been talking about. The winner of the last Grand Prize!

Gen. K. Monsieur, I heard your pictures much praised at the exhibition! A legionnaire, I see, my comrade! Ah sir, art has glorious privileges! That which we gentlemen of war win only after a life of long and bloody service, as a sort of recompense to our gray hairs—you obtain while yet in the flush of youth! Still, monsieur, all kinds of distinction are sisters! Eh, Count?

C. Du H. Right! right! Monsieur, depend upon it, they are not strangers!

H. You are exceedingly kind, gentlemen! But my decoration ranks as nothing compared to those exalted prizes received for having fought and bled for one's country!

A. O, Monsieur de Neuville, you are too modest! What would we know of our brave soldiers and our gallant wars, if art did not give them eternal life, and inspire new generations to like deeds of valor and heroism!

G. K. Bravo, Adelaide! Sir, that is unanswerable; you can say no more! But, Madame Leseigneur, is it not time for our little game of cards? I must have my revenge for my losses of yesterday.

C. Du H. Yes, madame, let him have his satisfaction. Once he gets the cards in his hands, his ardor will soon cool, I warrant you.

A. You, Monsieur de Neuville, do you play cards too?

H. Yes, mademoiselle, sometimes. But I am such a poor player, I always lose!

A. That is nothing! You will soon learn—you cannot help it,—with such veterans as these; who miss their

meals sometimes, their sleep often—but their cards never!

M. L. But first let us taste a glass of that fine wine, which comes from the General's estate in Burgundy.

Gen. K. Agreed! That will give us courage! But let us hasten—it is already late! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 4.—*A Cafe*,—ALPHONSE LATOURETTE, LOUIS, *and* EUGENE, *discovered, seated at a table. A waiter, near by*

Eugene. I wonder where our old friend de Neuville is nowadays! We have seen nothing of him for several weeks.

Louis. He must be out of town. Otherwise he would surely have been here with us.

Alphonse. Well, you may think so! For my part I think the poor boy is quite sick.

E. What! And you have not told us!

L. This is shameful! He will think we have deserted him. You are a—

Alph. Hold on! Hold on! Can't you give a fellow a chance to take breath? I was just going to add that the malady was one in which we could do him no good! In short, it is an ailment of the heart—lovesickness!

E. Oh, is that the trouble?

L. He'll soon recover. Who is she anyway? Not that pretty little Greek he had for his model, I hope!

Alph. No! worse than that!

E. How! You don't mean to say that—

Alph. Yes—that's just what I mean!

L. The deuce! He's done for. I noticed he invariably used to follow them on their walks; strolling along a good ways behind, as if afraid of attracting their attention.

E. Well, I wish him joy! I only know I tried fishing in those waters, but couldn't raise even a ripple; not the kind they're after! I suppose they think Hippolyte is now well on the road to fame and riches, and the earlier they get hold of him the longer the game will last. That old one is a shrewd piece!

Alph. At any rate it will only be right to give de Neuville fair warning! [*Enter* HIPPOLYTE.] Hold! Here he comes now! Hallo! Hippolyte, come here and join us.

H. Good evening, gentlemen! A little chartreuse, waiter!

Alph. Ah, my good Hippolyte—you should not have come so late! You have just missed a pleasant little story that I have been telling.

H. Indeed! I am sorry for that, Alphonse! Can't you repeat it?

A. Oh yes! But first tell us why you look so melancholy. Are you in debt and dunned? Have you an ideal that refuses to materialize on canvas? Or is it because some cold statute of a Galatea won't melt into warm flesh? Come, now, confess! It must be owing to one of these three categories! For under them are included all the woes, as well as all the joys of the human race. Show me a man who cares not for money, for fame, or for the love of woman—and I will show you a *lusus naturæ*—a monstrosity whose blood runs water. My dear boy, it can't be the first with you—because your new picture has just brought you a small fortune; it can't be the second, because you are a legionnaire and all Paris is ringing with your name. *Ergo*—to steal some of Shakespeare's little Latin—*Ergo*, it must be the third category. Confess now—what pair of bewitching orbs are they, that surcharged with love's electricity, have darted their flames into your enamored heart, and kindled it with an all-consuming passion! Aha! you blush! See, gentlemen, a marvel—a modern miracle! A Parisian artist, *ætat* twenty-four, who blushes like a school-boy caught at his first kiss. Ah, Hippolyte! I really believe you, when you say that art has been your only mistress—and that—

H. Come,—daw,—magpie,—automaton — mechanism —you good-for-nothing chatterer! Cease this badinage! Tell me that story—and quick, too! I must be off again!

L. First, let us have a cigarette! I am all out!

E. And I too.

H. Here is a fresh box. Help yourselves.

A. Laferme's choicest! Parbleu! Hippolyte—have you already the wealth of a Crœsus? Waiter—bring us each an absinthe! Now then, to my story. You remember how in the park we used to watch that magnificent dame who carried herself with such a regal stateliness—and whom we dubbed "her majesty"—one of the old regime you know—and that beautiful, starry-eyed maiden who used to accompany her—

H. Yes, I remember! but what of that—do you know them? Quick! Alphonse; don't be all night with your long-winded prefaces!

Alph. Tut! tut! tut! Hear the boy! One would think from his impetuous eagerness—he was already a victim, fast in their toils!

H. What do you mean! You forget that you were just speaking of two virtuous and highly respectable ladies!

Alph. Hear me through, Hippolyte—for Heaven's sake—and don't be a child! Where was I—Oh yes—Well! as I was saying, these two remarkable women, who used to have all the young men, and the old, too, for that matter—ogling and staring at them—are two of the most skillful adventuresses in Paris!

H. How! The devil, Alphonse! You are drunk, man! You don't know what you are saying!

Alph. Listen to Don Quixote here! Doubtless he has registered a vow henceforth to defend all creatures that wear chemises and petticoats, from the barbed arrows of slander! Louis,—Eugene—come to my support. Is it not true?

L. Yes, it is Hippolyte.

E. No doubt of it.

H. My God! Shall I listen to all this! Alphonse—we have been friends—be careful—do not go too far—you have already—

Alph. Yes, it is because of our friendship that I tell you this, my dear fellow! To sum up the whole matter briefly, this Madame Leseigneur, and her daughter, Mademoiselle Adelaide—

H. Stop! I will have no names! And by Heaven!

Alphonse Latourette, if you do not well substantiate this wretched calumny—you shall account to me for every word—for every breath you have drawn in its vile utterance!

Alph. [*Aside.*] Poor fellow! I'm afraid its too late! [*Aloud.*] But patience! patience! Hippolyte! Bear with me a little longer and I will have finished! You have been to the Leseigneurs' rooms every night now for a month past! And you know as well as I—that every evening, without a single exception, General Kergarouet has been there with his friend, the Count Du Halga; and that as regularly as the hour strikes, he has a game of cards and loses just fifty francs! Now, have you reflected on this? Have you considered why he loses his fifty francs each night? Have you observed any familiarity on his part with Adelaide? Do they not seem to be on very intimate terms? Does he not kiss her lips, pat her cheek, chuck her under the chin—nay, have you never seen her in his lap?

H. A thousand devils! Whence learned you this, Alphonse? Alas! I can no longer doubt your sincerity! It is all true—too true! I have tried to blind myself—but in vain. Ah, God! What tortures have I not endured!

Alph. And then, too,—the Leseigneurs live well—that is to say, they dress superbly for such humble lodgings! They have but a small estate; the rent of which would not half suffice to pay their dressmaker! And in addition, Madame Leseigneur has a snug little account at her banker's; laid up against a rainy day, like the shrewd schemer she is!

H. Hold! now I think of it—Mademoiselle Leseigneur told me once that General Kergarouet was her godfather. Yes—now I remember it well! Does not this explain it all—we should now no longer doubt—it is clear—is it not? Say yes, my dearest Alphonse! If you love me, if you are, indeed, my friend—O say *yes!*

Alph. I wish I might, Hippolyte! But if that is so—why does he not make them a present of the money? His revenues amount to some ninety thousand francs a year! Why then does he not give Mademoiselle Ade-

[illegible] income [illegible] fifteen thousand francs, instead of living it at Paris? Ah, depend upon it, that is a mere pretext—there is something behind it all! And again, Hippolyte, have you not [illegible]—[illegible] almost every [illegible]? And [illegible] Madame Desmigneux always [illegible] play? Come, my dear Hippolyte, do not [illegible] entirely [illegible].

H. Enough! Enough! My head is already spinning [illegible] with a thousand [illegible] and [illegible] things. I can stand this no longer, my friends! I must [illegible] I thank you for [illegible] there [illegible] me from—[illegible]—at any rate, [illegible] anger at [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. I will see you again. But [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

Alph. We must [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible] all [illegible] will be well [illegible] this [illegible]. He may destroy himself [illegible] me. [illegible] [illegible]

ACT II.

SCENE [illegible]

A. [illegible] that [illegible] Mr. [illegible]. You [illegible] attention—[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]—and I will [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

neither can, either. But I'm afraid [illegible] a messy [illegible] at all.

M. L. [illegible] is a note from the [illegible] today. He is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

eighty kisses! Still, that is nothing to you, oh no! a mere trifle! Well—may be there are others who do not think so! May be there are others who would count one second with my lips as worth an hour of ordinary time!

H. True, mademoiselle, true! I forgot! Perhaps there *are* others! Perhaps your lips are common, too! Perhaps with you, kisses are merchandise! and that may be why you are so thrifty at reckoning with me!

A. Heavens! Hippolyte, how wild you look! You are ill! You have a fever!

H. Now I have your own word for it! Tell me, Adelaide, do I not look like any simple country lout—to be fooled by pinchbeck and paste? I am good game, am I not? As innocent and guileless, as a maiden at her first ball! To you, mademoiselle, it must be, indeed, refreshing!

A. Why, Hippolyte, what are you saying! What do you mean? You are angry with me! What have I done?

H. If false kisses are forgeries on heaven—oh why may we not detect their signatures on a maiden's lips! But no! there they are, just as rosy, as full, as fresh and dewy with fragrance, as if they were still inviolate! Ah, Adelaide, when first a man learns that the woman he loves is false to him—it is as if he who had been dreaming in Paradise were to awaken suddenly and find himself in hell! I have been dreaming, fondly dreaming—have I not, Adelaide? O tell me, if there still dwells in your soul one atom of pity, one shred of God's truth—whether I am now awake!

A. Hippolyte! You are taken ill! Your eyes are burning with a wild fever! Your cheek is flushed! You are trembling! O my darling—I was but jesting! It was cruel! Yet how could I know that—

H. Is it even so, my sweet one? Nay, I am not ill! See, I am calm now! I will dream yet a little longer! Do you not remember the sailor in the old song who was drawn—madly—irresistibly—to the arms of the Lorelei—even though he knew death awaited him!

A. Hippolyte!

H. Yes, dearest!

A. When you came—you offered to—you wanted—you—

H. What, Adelaide? I am obtuse—I do not take your meaning!

A. Quick! Kiss me, just once, Hippolyte! We may not be long alone!

[*Enter* M. L.]

M. L. Welcome, Monsieur de Neuville! You are come to keep us from being lonesome! Here is a telegram from the General. He is detained out of town indefinitely, and will not be here to-night! So we shall have to play our evening's game without him!

H. I am at your service, Madame Leseigneur!

M. L. Well, the cards are ready—let us begin at once! [*Sit down and prepare to play.* M. L. *and* A. *put some coins in front of them on the table.* H. *takes out an old silk purse and places it also on the table.*] By the bye—Monsiéur de Neuville—I wish to ask your advice about a pastille of my husband, that was made now a long time since—by an artist who was then of some note. It is much faded, and I am afraid it will last but a few years at most, before it becomes entirely obliterated. Come with me a moment;—Adelaide excuse us! [*While they examine portrait on the wall* ADELALDE *takes his purse and puts it in her pocket.*]

H. Yes, madame, you are right! In a short while it will be quite worthless! If you will allow me, I will take the greatest pleasure in making you a painting from it.

M. L. Sir, you are too generous—I could not think of taking advantage of your kindness. You are so busy already; it would perhaps withhold you from work far more important!

H. I assure you it would be an exceeding pleasure! So far from trespassing on my time, it would be indeed a relief—a recreation— a pastime for my leisure moments. Ah, what noble features! What a fine head—how strongly your daughter resembles her father! Madame, allow me, I beg of you, to send for it to-morrow.

M. L. Monsieur, I could not—

H. Nay, I insist!

M. L. Well if you insist—I will confess it would be a very great happiness to me. But should it add to your labors, sir, I shall never forgive myself. Now, let us return to our game! Adelaide, have you lost your patience? Do you know that M. de Neuville is to paint a fresh portrait from the pastille of—

H. Pardon, ladies, my purse! Where can it have gone? I left it here, on the table!

A. Your purse!

M. L. On the table!

A. May be it is on the floor!

M. L. Let us search!

A. Are you positive, monsieur, that you had it with you?

M. L. Can you not be mistaken? What if you left it in your room!

H. Did you not see it? It was surely here when I left the table.

A. Impossible, monsieur!

M. L. We should have seen it without doubt!

H. [*Aside.*] And now to put the climax to it all—this open, bare-faced theft! [*Aloud.*] Ah yes! you are right. Now that I think of it, it *is* in my room: How stupid of me! A thousand pardons, ladies, for my blunder! What, is it already eight o'clock! I forgot! I meant only to stay a few moments. I have an appointment in half an hour. I must be off! I shall send for the portrait to-morrow, without fail. Be kind enough to have it ready! And now—good evening, Madame Leseigneur—Mademoiselle Adelaide, adieu! [*Exit.*]

M. L. What sudden haste!

A. Let us call him back! He is angry at something! Come, mamma! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 2.—HIPPOLYTE'S *Studio.*

H. Most wretched of men! She to whom you have given the first ardent love of your manhood—a common adventuress! Ah, I see it all now! This diabolic ruse

of cards—a mere pretext—a foil to keep up the slimmest of appearances! But to steal my purse with a pitiful forty francs! This is the pettiest of thievery! And so naive—so unblushing—so ready with lie upon lie—pah! it sickens me! To think—deceit—treachery—and worse—a thousand times worse—can have its abode in those limpid, beautiful eyes through which an angel might look forth unabashed! That steadfast, unfaltering gaze, which seemed to pierce my inmost soul and search out its secrets! Those chaste and delicate features—that clear, transparent cheek—now suffused with rosy blushes, and now waxen-pale! O God! is it because I have seen but with a painter's vision, that I have been so blinded to all else! It must be! O thou divine mistress, Art! Thou hast indeed punished me for my unfaithfulness! Hence forth, I am thine alone! And now—let me seek oblivion in my work! But hold! you have one first duty yet to perform! He who has shattered your ideal—who has so nearly wrecked your life, with all its fondly-cherished hopes—he must meet his deserts. I will write him a challenge at once. [*Writes.*] Ah, my General, your dupe shall be avenged! For each laugh behind his back—twenty groans to his face! Yes, that is a fair reckoning. [*Enter* ALPHONSE.] You, Alphonse! The one I most want to see in all the world!

A. What's up now, my dear fellow! Ha! by the blood in your eye, and the fire in your voice—I should say it was nothing less than a duel!

H. You are right! Read this!

A. What! General Kergarouet! Ah, now I understand! You have followed up the hint I gave you the other day.

H. Alphonse, you are a noble fellow! To what pains must you not have been to find out what you did!

A. Nonsense, Hippolyte! It was common street-talk! But I confess, I did put *you* under rather close espionage, when I found out why you had deserted us, and where you spent your evenings. I said to myself—"Now here's this great, simple-hearted boy, Hippolyte, gone and fallen in love! No warning—no experience—and his

first attack's likely to go hard—he takes things so seriously! Now, what if he were not to get hold of the right one! Ah, what a foolish mess he would make of it! And—you see I was right. You'll forgive me, Hippolyte! You have no mother to look out for you, you know! And the great world is like an unknown sea to you! You have lived altogether away from it—wrapped up in your art!· Yes, it is well that you have had a "staunch friend or two"—as Beranger says—to look out for you! although your first experience with a "gay sweetheart" has been rather discouraging!

H. Alphonse, on our friendship, I entreat you never to speak of that again to me! But the challenge—carry that at once, and make all the arrangements. The sooner that is despatched, the better,—as for me, I shall never be at peace till I have either rid the world of that gray-haired monster—or perished in the attempt!

A. You must be patient, my dear boy! General Kergarouet is leagues distant from Paris on one of his estates, and will not return for several weeks at least. But be assured I shall wait upon him at the earliest moment and give him your message. For I cannot but believe, with you, that his actions have been a foul insult which can only be effaced with blood!

H. Use your own judgment, my dear Alphonse; I leave all to you!

A. I shall look out for your best interests—do not fear! But let us go and dine—I am famished! and as for you—you have evidently had no sleep last night; and I doubt if you have tasted food since yesterday.

H. No—true—I have not! I will at least take a glass of wine with you! Ah, last night, Alphonse! it is horrible! Could you know what misery I have endured! A paltry sum of a few francs! O Heavens! it seems incredible! Come—I will tell it to you—and then—then—it must be dismissed forever! Come, Alphonse—I will go with you—anywhere—anywhere—to escape from myself and my thoughts! [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 3.—*A Street.*

[*Enter* COUNT DU HALGA *and* ALPHONSE.]

C. Du H. So he wants to fight my friend, General Kergarouet?

A. I think the challenge is plain enough; you have read it, sir!

C. Du H. And because he has listened to some of the scandalous trash that the street-gossips have been trumpeting, eh?

A. Sir, I did not come to listen to your insults! Let us arrange the preliminaries without any further unnecessary parley!

C. Du H. Now, young man, so far as the General's losing fifty francs each night is concerned—let me inform you that in no other way could he accomplish his object; which is to bestow a small sum upon the widow and child of his old companion-in-arms, Baron Leseigneur! Madame is proud—proud as Lucifer! And after exhausting his ingenuity, and wearing out his patience in various little expedients—all of which were quite in vain—he at last hit upon this plan; or, rather I did, sir. For it was my scheme originally! At the slightest hint of anything like a gift—at the merest approach to aught that might be construed as charity—the Baroness ruffled up in an instant; and more than once we were bowed out of her apartments with freezing politeness! Nay, twice, the door was shut outright in our faces! So, what could we do? Now, as you know, Madame Leseigneur was one of the old regime! one of the ladies at court—and an inveterate card-player! Yes, why should I hesitate to say it—an inveterate gambler! For in the last days of the Bourbons, every one gambled—courtier, priest, and soldier—men, women, and children. It was all they had to! And it was not held inconsistent with the strictest morality! Is it strange then, that a life-long habit should still cling with nearly, if not quite, all its old tenacity! As for Madame Leseigneur—she would gamble to her last sou. She could not live without the excitement; it is what keeps her up! She has had a stormy life of it,

monsieur. Husband and fortune alike lost in the bloody days of the Revolution; compelled to keep herself and child in hiding for many weary months! Ah, sir! She is a heroine! She has never once lost courage! And now in the evening of life, to have this stupid slander thrust upon her! Sir, your friend, Monsieur de Neuville, does not know that the General has willed his whole fortune to his god-daughter on his death! And that she will have a handsome settlement on her marriage! Mon Dieu! What idiots! Come, let us go to the General—he will soon convince you that you and your friend are two young, hot-headed fools!

A. Sir, I am not accustomed to such language! Your words force me to demand an ample apology, or—

C. Du H. *Or—or*—yes!—*or*—what! You will fight, too! Well—come with me first! And after we have seen General Kergarouet, perhaps you will not be so anxious! Perhaps it is you who will eat your words and apologize! Come! The General is waiting for us!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE 4.—*Night. In front of* ADELAIDE'S *window.*

[*Enter* HIPPOLYTE.]

H. 'Tis long since I have seen her! My soul is starved for a glimpse of her dear face! Starved? If the soul could die within the body, mine would have long since perished! Oh, is it fancy—or what can it be—this terrible incubus that seems to weigh me down—this leaden, lifeless *something* that drags within me, and stifles thought and feeling! Her voice—that spoke always to my heart—with its rhythmic ripple and flow—its sweet and tender modulations—now rising, now falling—its music thrilling me with rapture—swelling and expanding—till it seemed to bear my soul—on—on—to some distant haven—where we two dwelt alone! Oh it is maddening anguish now to think of it! But see! that is her shadow—she comes to the window—she is looking out! Dear one! How thin—how pale, she has grown! What sadness is depicted on her countenance. My God!

she is weeping! I will—I must speak to her! What accursed lies have they been telling me! And I have believed them—never! She draws back—she is gone! O Adelaide—though the whole world accused you—I would cry it false! false! My love against the world—Adelaide! My love against the world! [*Exit.*]

SCENE 5.—MADAME LESEIGNEUR'S *apartments.* ADELAIDE *and her mother discovered.*

A. He has absented himself for two whole months, mamma! What can be the matter with him?

M. L. O, he is simply busy, my child! These artists when they have a great work before them, neglect not only themselves, but those they love the best, as well. Perhaps he has some grand commission—who knows?

A. True—but why could he not tell us of it? Why should he shun us as if we had the plague? Why should he avert his head every time he passes the door? Oh no, that is not it, mamma! I know—I feel—that it is something else!

M. L. Well—I wish we had never seen him, that is all! We were so happy before he came. And with our pleasant walks in the afternoon, and the General and the Count to play a social game of cards in the evening—we were a little world in ourselves! Ah, why must he come and destroy it all? You, Adelaide, you have eaten nothing, you have said nothing, you have not slept—since he has ceased his visits. You are growing thin—you are always pale—and I believe you weep a little when I am not by—is it not so—my dear?

A. Mamma—how can you? What should *I* care? True, he was a pleasant young man, and we liked to see him; but that was all! If he chooses to spend his evenings elsewhere, now—why, what is that to us?

M. L. Ah, you cannot deceive me that way, my daughter! Well, I will go to-morrow, and find out what he is doing, that he cannot come and see us any more. Now, my dear, I must write a letter; we have not received the last month's rent from our little estate. I am

afraid our tenant has been sick—he is always so prompt, you know!

A. Mamma, I am afraid Monsieur de Neuville saw me take his purse that evening, and thinks that—that—

M. L. What nonsense, Adelaide! His back was turned all the time. I took good care of that. And he is so absent-minded; if he has not forgotten all about it by this time, he of course thinks he lost it from his pocket somewhere! How surprised he will be when he—

A. Yes, won't he, mamma! I wonder if he has not papa's portrait done by this time? Ah me, I wish he would bring it to-night!

M. L. Well, may be he will. But I must write that letter. Be sure and remind the portress, Adelaide, that she must mail it to-night. It must reach Cernay-la-ville to-morrow, without fail.

A. All right, dear mamma! Do not worry! [*Exit* M. L.] I can act this out no longer! O Hippolyte—Hippolyte—now have I learned what love is! It is to taste the joys of Paradise when at your side—and to suffer the pangs of purgatory when away from you. It is to extract happiness from misery—to drain misery from bliss! To be tormented by a thousand doubts and fears daily! To remember and magnify one little word, until it grows into a whole discourse of mockery! To dwell upon and distort one little passing gesture, until it seems one long night-mare, haunting you even in your dreams. In short, love is the tempest that changes the placid, gently-flowing stream of girlhood to a restless torrent—rushing blindly it knows not whither! Ah, Hippolyte! You are cruel—cruel! What had I ever done, that you should so ruthlessly pluck from my heart, home, mother, friends, heaven—all—and leave in their stead naught but an empty void! True, once you filled it, and I missed nothing! But now that you have deserted me—O Hippolyte—Hippolyte—let me die—I can bear this life no longer! [*Knock.*] What! that is his—no! no! it can not be! my ears deceive me! I must be growing ill—I am already dizzy. Help Hippolyte!

[*Enter* HIPPOLYTE.]

H. Adelaide! My own—my dearest one! You are ill! Oh why have I not seen you! Speak to me, Adelade! You are ill! O God! if she were dying!

A. Hippolyte! It is you! Where have you been? Why have you forgotten me—it has made me ill—I have had fever—I have cried—oh! so hard—Hippolyte, when no one was by! Now, I know what love is—it is more than my life! But you! You have already found some one else! Some grand lady! a simple girl like me, you could not love for long! Is it not so, Hippolyte? Nay speak—I am prepared! I have schooled myself! I do not blame you! I am unworthy of you—I know it—ah! too well.

H. Sweet! My Adelaide! You are a saint! I contaminate you by my touch! I am a vile, unworthy wretch! I should worship you! And you love me so! This moment is supreme! What is art! What is fame! You love me! And you have been ill? I have made you so! A life time of penance will not suffice!

A. What! Your love is the same, Hippolyte! Why have you deserted me, then?

H. Deserted you! O Adelaide! You have been in my thoughts day and night! Waking or sleeping, I have beheld only you!

A. Why did you not come! I have watched for you—prayed for you—hourly! And you have passed by, looking at the sky or the pavement. Never a glance to see if I was waiting!

M. L. [*From within.*] Adelaide! Who is there? Do I not hear you talking! Have you told the portress? Here is the letter!

A. My mother! Say nothing, Hippolyte! She does not know—I have concealed all from her!

[*Enter* M. L.]

M. L. You, Monsieur de Neuville! Is your picture finished, then? O, you need not tell me! I know you artists! I was telling Adelaide only to-night, that you

had some great picture to paint! And until it was done you would forget all about your friends!

H. Yes, Madame Leseigneur, you are right! I have been very busy! Have scarcely left my studio at all—except to snatch a meal now and then. I have been commissioned to paint a battle-scene for the National Gallery. But yet you are mistaken, too! I shall not finish it for a long time. Only I could stand it no longer. I had to run in and see you to-night!

M. L. That is right, monsieur! You are always welcome! And now as a relaxation, let us have a friendly tilt at cards! Come, Adelaide, place the chairs!

H. What—cards again! and to-night! [*Aside.*]

A. How like old times it seems! O Hip—I mean Monsieur de Neuville! [*Fetches chairs, and all prepare to play.*]

M. L. Shuffle them well, Adelaide! May be Monsieur de Neuville has been practising on the sly, so he can win back a few francs!

A. Mamma! How can you accuse him so—when he has told you how busy he has been!

H. Practising—Madame Leseigneur! Ah, what would all the practise in the world avail against your skill!

M. L. Hearts trumps! It is your play, monsieur! The trick is mine! Play, Adelaide! You cannot take it! My lead! Play to the ace!

A. King!

H. A little six—as usual! You have the next, too!

M. L. Bravo, Adelaide! That one belongs to you! Now for the last!

H. No use! 'Tis yours!

M. L. Yes, I have won the game! Five francs from each; that's not so bad!

H. Pardon, ladies! My money's in my other coat! Let me fetch it! [*While he goes to his coat, A. slips a new purse, the exact counterpart of his old one, on the table in front of his chair. She holds the old one, fumbling with it confusedly.*]

M. L. Have you found it, monsieur?

H. Yes, here it is! Why, what is this! My purse! No—a new one! The very counterpart of that I lost!

And the forty francs here in the corner! How—Adelaide—you have my old one? I do not understand!

M. L. You must forgive us, Monsieur Hippolyte! One evening, the last time we played together, Adelaide took pity on your old, worn-out purse! "Poor Monsieur" —she said—"he has no one to make him a new one! Would it not be fun to steal his old one, mamma, while he is not looking, and let him think he has lost it! And then to knit him a nice, new one, with his initials worked in! You engage his attention and I will slily take it. He is so forgetful—so absent-minded, he will never know what has become of it!" So while I was showing you the pastille of Baron Leseigneur, she slipped it in her pocket. And now, she has had this new one done, oh! so long—and you have not been near us to get it! You naughty fellow.

H. Say no more, madame, say no more! Oh what a contemptible villain I have been. What a miserable block-head! If you but knew, ladies,—you would not speak to me—you would not look at me! Ah, what punishment do I not deserve! Adelaide—you are an angel! Madame Leseigneur, you do not know how I love your daughter! These two months I have been absent—I have suffered tortures! And it is all my fault! Forgive me, Adelaide! Pardon, madame, I will explain all. But you will give her to me—my Adelaide—will you not? No, you can not refuse me—she loves me also. It is not sudden, Madame Leseigneur, believe me! Since first I saw her sweet face, something said—something whispered to me—there is the one woman of all the world for you—Hippolyte de Neuville! There is the queen of your heart! And for a whole year I worshipped in silence—not daring to speak—not approaching you—till the day you found me unconscious in my studio.

M. L. That is enough, Monsieur de Neuville. It is a serious matter! One cannot be too careful when one's daughter is to be given away! You have taken me by surprise! I did not know it had come to this! Adelaide is yet so young! I must consult my friend, General Kergarouet!

H. Mon Dieu! It is with him I have to fight a duel!

M. L. & A. What! A duel! O Monsieur de Neuville! Hippolyte! [*A loud knocking is heard.*]

[*Enter* GENERAL K., COUNT DU H., *and* ALPHONSE.]

Gen. K. Ah, here he is, the simpleton!

M. L. What does this mean, General? Gentlemen, for heaven's sake, explain this mystery.

Gen K. A pretty mess, indeed. This young gallant has sent me a challenge, forsooth! Hearing certain wild tittle-tattle among his friends about my relations to the family of my dear and honored friend, Baron Leseigneur —what does he do—without waiting to find out the truth —this blockhead of a boy, but offer to fight me a duel! And if we had not drawn from Monsieur Latourette, here, his second, what 'twas all about—it might have been my painful duty to have deprived him of the use of his brush-arm for several months. Yes, young sir, *ne sutor ultra crepidam*—the artist to his brush and the soldier to his rapier! I have pinked many a fine fellow who could have disarmed you at the first pass without winking.

Ad. Heavens, Hippolyte—what if—

M. L. You see, General, my daughter and Monsieur de Neuville—

Gen. K. Yes—I see—I see! Monsieur Latourette has explained it all to me! And now I suppose the young rogues want my blessing!

Ad. My dear old god-papa!

M. L. I was just telling Monsieur Hippolyte that I would not—

Gen. K. I knew it! You would not give your consent till I had awarded Monsieur le Artist a certificate of character! And I suppose I must do this in order to prevent an elopement—a runaway match!

H. Sir, you treat me harshly—but you have me at a disadvantage! What can I say? I have deserved it all!

Ad. He don't mean it, Hippolyte. He is just a dear, rough old war-dog—with a bark worse than his bite!

Gen. K. What! do you call me names, you ungrateful minx?

Alph. One word, my dear Hippolyte! The General has explained to me your stupid blunder about the purse!

M. L. What! did he think—

Gen. K. Yes, he thought—

Ad. O Hippolyte—was it that!

H. Say no more! I shall never cease to feel remorse! And yet Madame Leseigneur—dear Adelaide—when you know all, you will see how easy it was—how every accursed little thread seemed to fall in place to make up the whole monstrous fabric!

Gen. K. Well, my children, I have only one word to say to you! Adelaide, since you have got the purse —see that you always keep it! You, Hippolyte, see that she never has to steal it from you again! And now, let us all go and drink the health of the loveliest bride in Paris!

[CURTAIN.]

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